

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Page 1, between the title of the application ("METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR SEPARATING SEMICONDUCTOR CHIPS") and the first section heading ("BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION"), please insert the following new section:

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of Serial No. 09/534,521 filed 24 March 2000, now allowed, which is a continuation-in-part of Serial No. 09/516,504 filed 1 March 2000, now US 6,297,075 B1.

Page 1, lines 2-10, please delete the paragraph in its entirety without prejudice or disclaimer of any scope or subject matter.

Page 9, lines 5-24:

After the wafer 2 has been conveyed to the position of the porous plate 4, the whole of device (circuit) surface of the wafer 2 is sucked by the action of the aforementioned suction force. Under this condition, a tape-cutter edge 5 underlying the porous plate 4 is raised and rotated to cut off the dicing tape 3 from the ring 1. After the cut off operation, the tape cutter edge is lowered and the ring 1 removed of the dicing tape 3 is saved to its original position. In order to separate the wafer 2 from the cut-off dicing tape 3, a guide plate 6 is moved up to the sucked wafer 2 and guides the tape at a level which is, for example, 0.2 mm distant from the top surface (now facing downwards) of the [porous plate] dicing tape. The tape is caused to profile a tip angle of, for example, 15° of the guide plate and the dicing tape 3 is pulled in a direction making an angle of about 45° to the [dicing] separation direction

while making the dicing tape 3 and guide plate 6 synchronous with each other as shown in Fig. 2, thereby separating the wafer 2 from the dicing tape 3. Torque for tape peel-off is, for example, 650g.

Page 9, line 25 through page 10, line 5:

The operation for separation of the wafer 2, more specifically, the tape peel-off operation, will be described in greater detail with reference to Fig. 5. A dicing tape 52 is sucked as a whole by the action of a porous plate 51 and the tape 52 is peeled off by causing the tape sheet to profile or creep along a guide 54 having a tip angle of 15° in a direction making an angle of 45° to the [dicing] separation direction on a wafer 53. Denoted by 55 is a ring and by 56 is a chip.

Page 10, line 26 through page 11, line 19:

By considering that a chip 8 should not be damaged by a chip sucker head 7 during pick-up operation, the chip sucker head 7 is lowered to a level which is 0.12 mm distant from the chip top surface and started to suck the chip 8. When the chip is desired to be stored with its device (circuit) surface facing downwards, the chip sucker head 7 is moved to a position of an ordinary tray 9 [chip] and is then lowered to a level which is 0.2 mm distant from the top surface of the tray to store the chip in the ordinary tray 9. The reason why the sucker head is only lowered to, for example, 0.2 mm above the tray is that the chip should not be damaged during storage. When a chip 8 is desired to be stored with its device (circuit) surface facing upwards, the chip 8 is moved up to a position of an inversive tray 10 and is stored in the tray 10 under the same condition for the storage in the ordinary tray 9. After the inversive

tray 10 has been filled up with chips, the inversive tray 10 is raised, turned and lowered while retaining the stored chips by sucking and thereafter the chips 8 are pushed by means of pins 11 so as to be transferred to an ordinary tray 9. After the transfer, the inversive tray 10 is raised, turned and lowered so as to return to its original position.